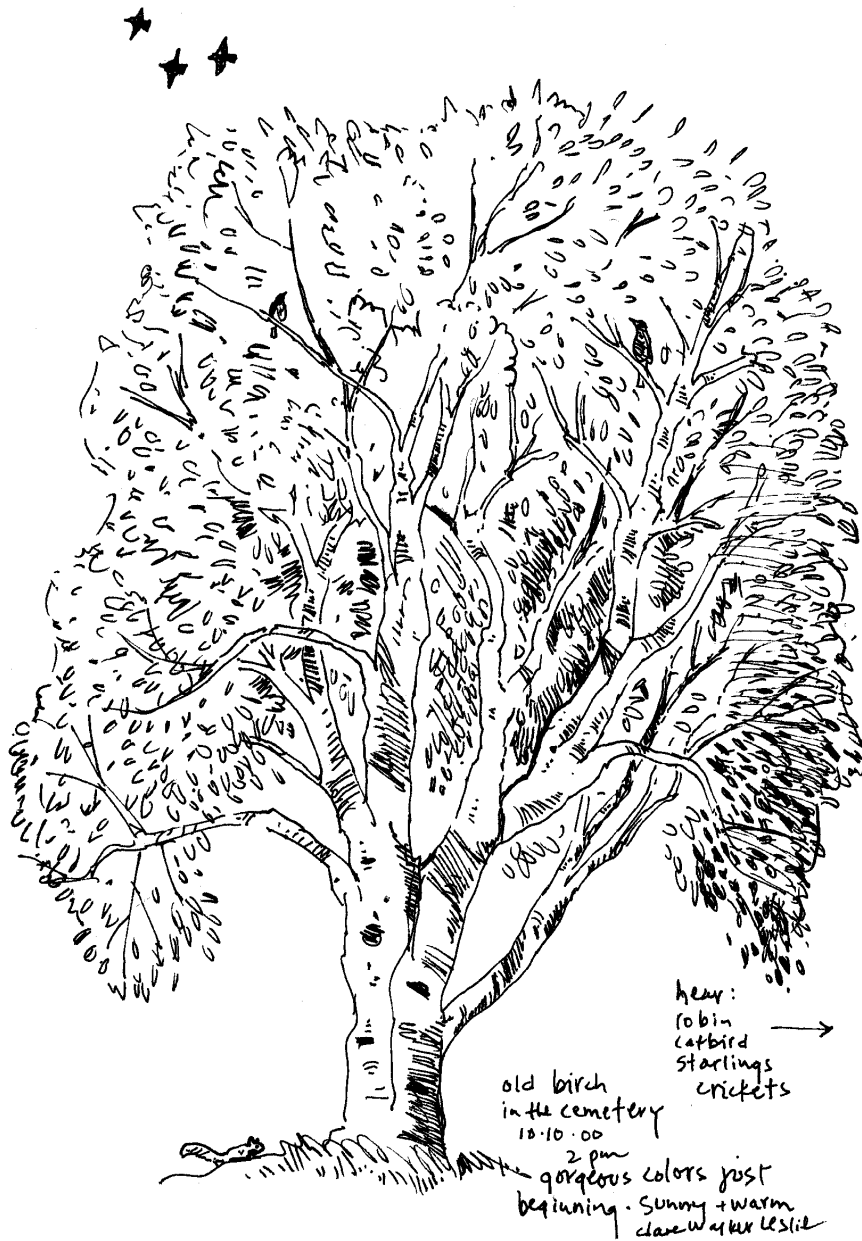




# Clare Walker Leslie's Guide to Sketching Trees



Student Nature Journal  
Lessons For Hope™

## Introduction

This journal will help you to draw trees. You will find directions for drawing blind and modified contours, and deciduous and evergreen trees (see glossary for definitions). For each type of tree there is a corresponding blank page that can be used as a template for your drawings. When choosing a location for the activity, it will be helpful to find a tree far enough away from you to see the entire silhouette. Try to be as accurate as possible, and remember to observe, create and have fun! If at any time the type of drawing exercise seems too hard or confusing, feel free to copy Clare's drawings. Remember, this is how the masters learn to draw!

## Blind Contour Exercise

### Clare's Tree

September 11 2002  
Winsor School - 7<sup>th</sup> grades  
Boston, MA  
overcast - warm  
75° +/-  
12 hrs 41 min light  
1<sup>st</sup> quarter moon  
drought still

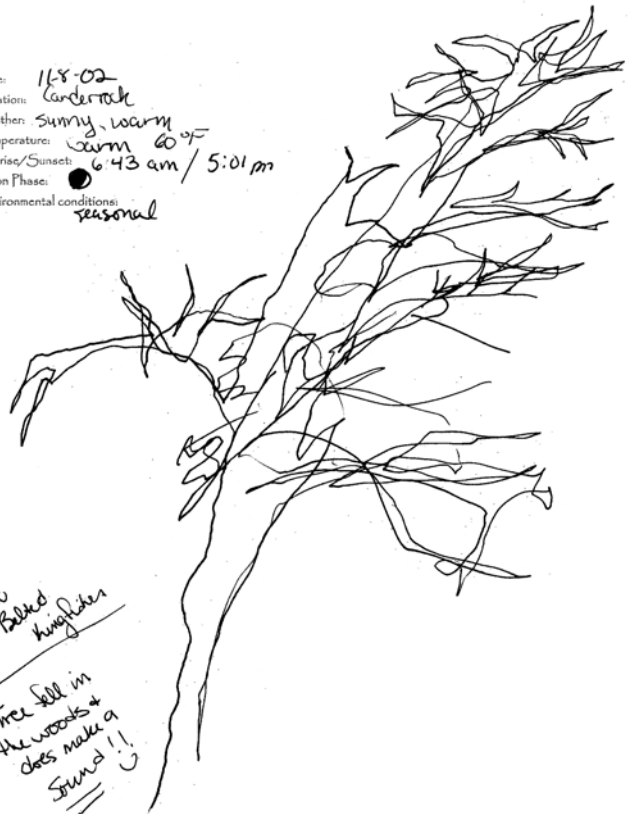


60' Sugar maple in  
School yard

Tree with leaves

### Student's Tree

Date: 11-8-02  
Location: Carderock  
Weather: Sunny, warm  
Temperature: warm 60°-  
Sunrise/Sunset: 6:43 am / 5:01 pm  
Moon Phase: ☉  
Environmental conditions: seasonal



Saw  
Bald  
Kingfisher  
Tree full in  
the woods &  
does make a  
Sound!!!

Tree with no leaves

Source: Jacqueline Little

## Blind Contour of Tree

Date:

Location:

Weather:

Temperature:

Sunrise/Sunset:

Moon Phase:

Habitat Conditions:

- Blind contours are drawn using one continuous line, without ever looking at your paper.
- Don't peek until you are through the whole tree-leaves, branches, etc.
- Use scrap paper for additional drawings.

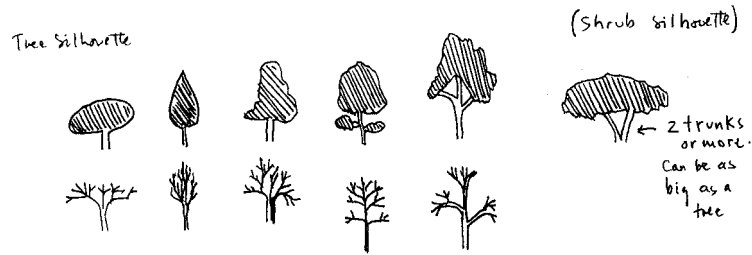
## Modified Contour of Tree

- Modified contours are drawn using one continuous line, but you are allowed to look at your paper.
- These exercises are for **SEEING** trees, not for making 'Good drawings!' Share your drawings with each other and laugh. But also look for how well you have described your tree!

# The Basics

## Tree Silhouette

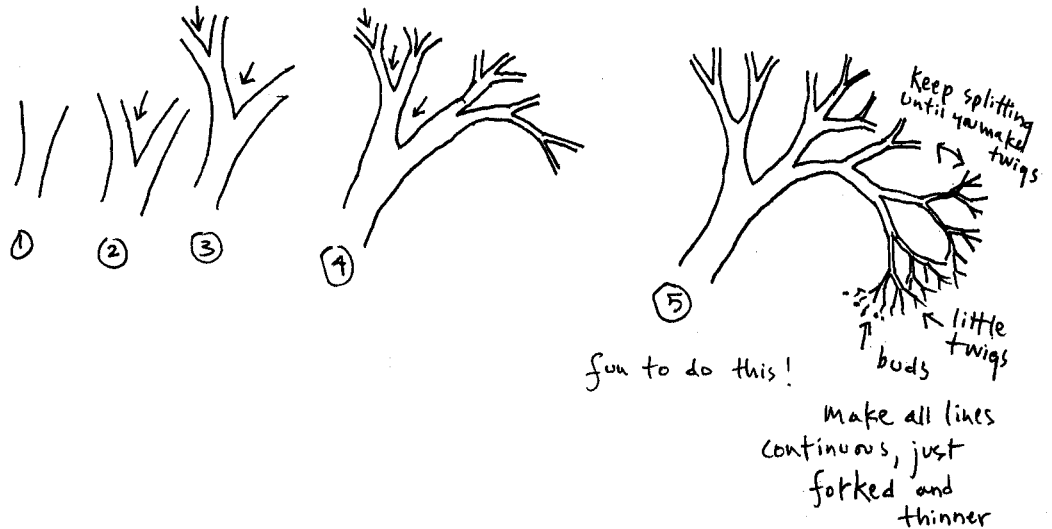
Trees come in different shapes.  
Note the basic shape of the tree crown and forking of the branches:



## Drawing Tree Limbs

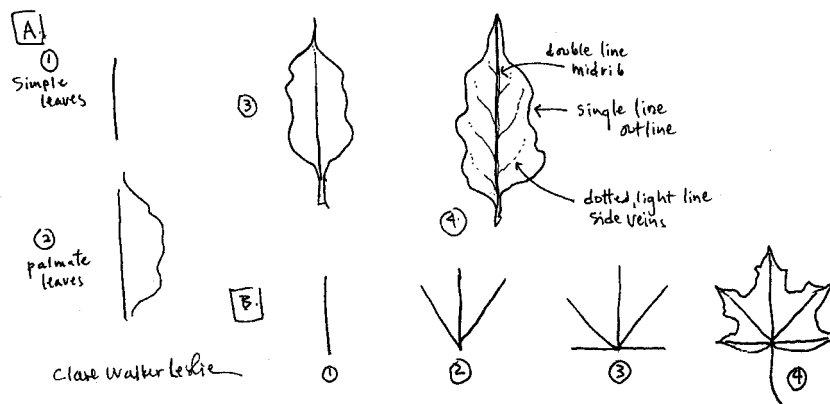
Branches grow out from the trunk, getting thinner and thinner until they finally become twigs to hold leaves.

Practice splitting and forking of tree branches, like highways splitting!



## Drawing Leaves

1. Draw mid vein first.
- 2 & 3. Draw leaf outline.
4. Fill in the side veins.



Source: Clare Walker Leslie

# The Basics

## Tree Silhouette

Draw silhouette of your tree.  
Note the basic shape of the tree crown  
and forking of the branches.

## Drawing Tree Limbs

Draw forking of branches.  
Remember, branches grow out  
from the trunk, getting thinner  
and thinner until finally become  
twigs to hold leaves.


## Drawing Leaves

1. Draw mid vein first.
- 2 & 3. Draw leaf outline.
4. Fill in the side veins.

# Summer/Fall Deciduous Tree Exercise

leaf shapes:

ΣΝ maple

 oak

ash

4. birch

0000

beech

①. Mark off edges of your drawing to limit the shape and so it won't go off the page! —

free canopy  
leaf arrangement  
out from center

⑦ put in symbols of leaf shapes-

⑦ put in symbols  
of leaf shapes -  
going around  
tree's canopy

⑥ Put in branches as you see them through the leaves.

Now draw the tree's  
⑤ Canopy - as if cutting  
out of a background

Draw major branches as they split.  
(This varies by species.)

2.  
I start at  
the base of the  
tree and →  
draw up, noting  
how trunk comes  
up from roots and  
ground

Draw trunk up to where branches begin

Shapes to show  
leaf masses

10. Draw individual leaf and seed(s)

Sugar Maple  
in my front yard  
Granville, Vermont  
10.13.02  
Label tree etc

Glenn Walker Leslie suggests:

1. Make your drawing small  $\rightarrow 5 \times 7$  or  $6 \times 8$
2. Don't spend more than 30 min. so you don't get discouraged or have too much detail!

Draw in bark texture if you want, as well as tree holes, nests, any birds or animals you see

11. Label tree etc

# Summer/Fall Deciduous Tree

Date:

Location:

Weather:

Temperature:

Sunrise/Sunset:

Moon phase:

Habitat Conditions:

1. Keep your drawing  
no bigger than 6 x 8.  
Mark edges as in  
Clare's drawing.

2. Begin at  
base, as tree  
curves up  
from roots.

3. Carefully see  
how tall trunk is.

4. Draw major  
branch  
separations.

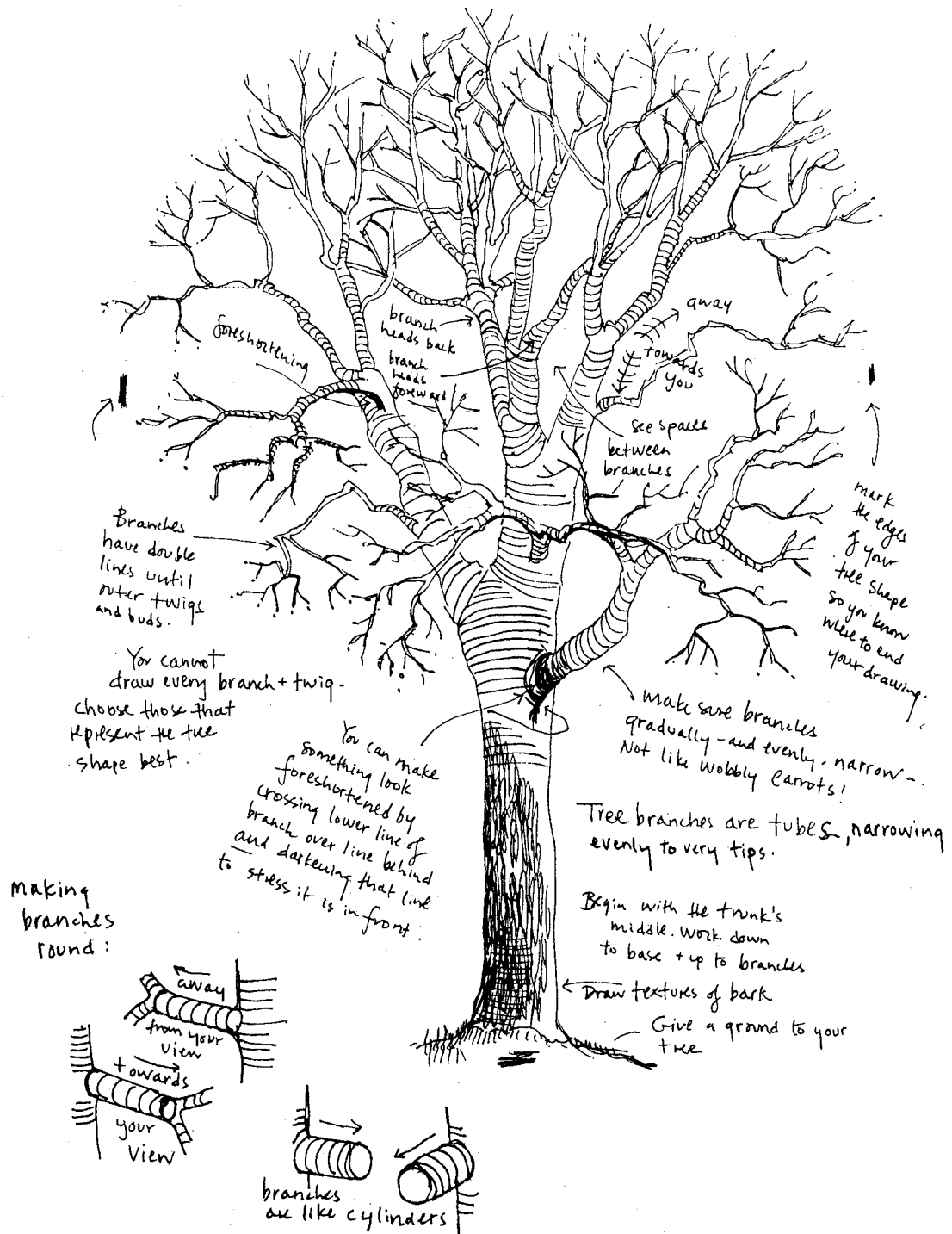
5. Draw in canopy, as if  
cutting tree from sky.

6. Put in  
branch clusters  
If they appear  
through canopy.

7. Are leaves  
jagged or round?

8. Draw individual  
leaf and seed  
and label. Record  
evidence of  
animal activity.

# Winter/Spring Deciduous Tree Exercise





# Winter/Spring Deciduous Tree

Date:

Location:

Weather:

Temperature:

Sunrise/Sunset:

Moon phase:

Habitat Conditions:

1. Keep your drawing no bigger than 6 x 8. Mark in edges as in Clare's drawing. You can make a box if you want.

2. Begin at base, as tree curves up from roots.

3. Carefully see how tall trunk is.

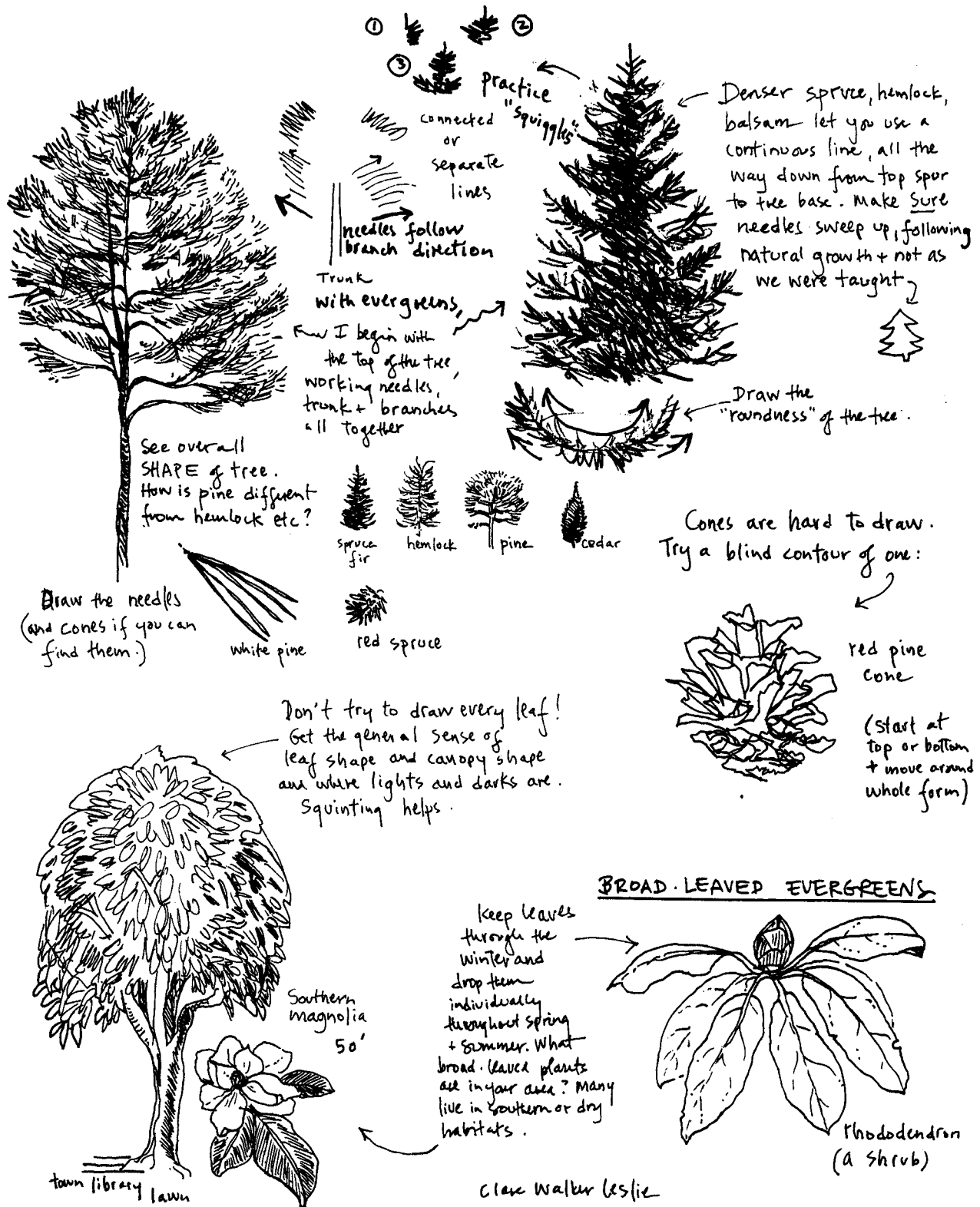
4. Draw major branch separations.

5. Notice direction of branches.

6. Draw roots, they reflect the canopy shape.

7. Look at drawing for additional tips.

# Evergreen Tree Exercise



# Evergreen Tree

Date:

Location:

Weather:

Temperature:

Sunrise/Sunset:

Moon phase:

Habitat Conditions:

1. Keep your drawing  
no bigger than 6 x 8.  
Mark in edges as in  
Clare's drawing.

2. Start at top;  
work around  
outer shape.

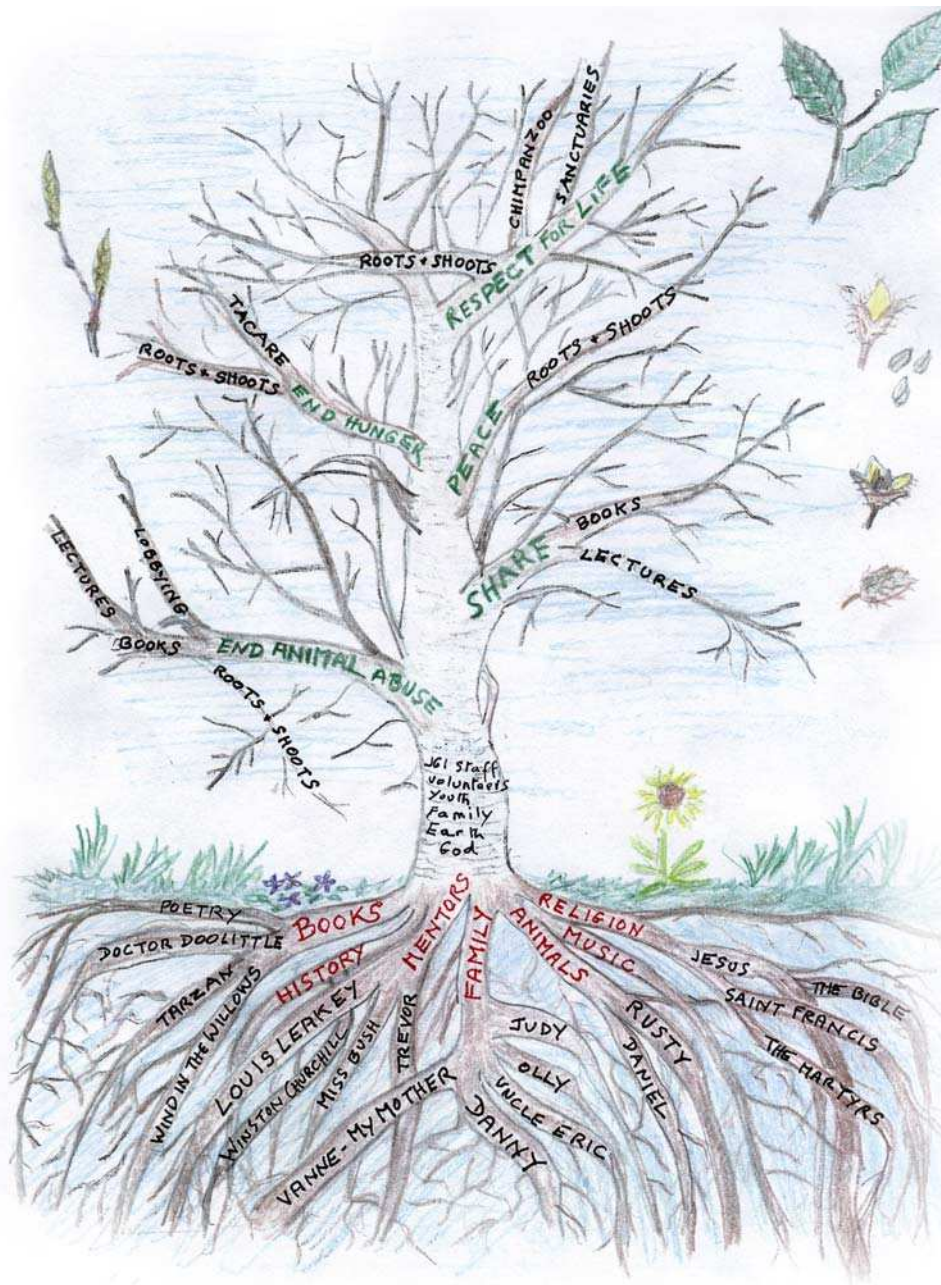
3. Fill in  
needle details.

4. Blind contour  
of pine cone.

# Roots & Shoots Tree Exercise

Now that you have practiced sketching trees you are ready to choose and draw a tree that most represents who you are! Be sure to use your imagination and include the root structure underneath the ground. Leave enough space in the roots to label the people who support you and in the branches to label your hopes and dreams. Review Roots & Shoots Tree Exercise in Lessons For Hope. [www.lessonsforhope.org/student/Unit1/unitone\\_activity1.asp](http://www.lessonsforhope.org/student/Unit1/unitone_activity1.asp)

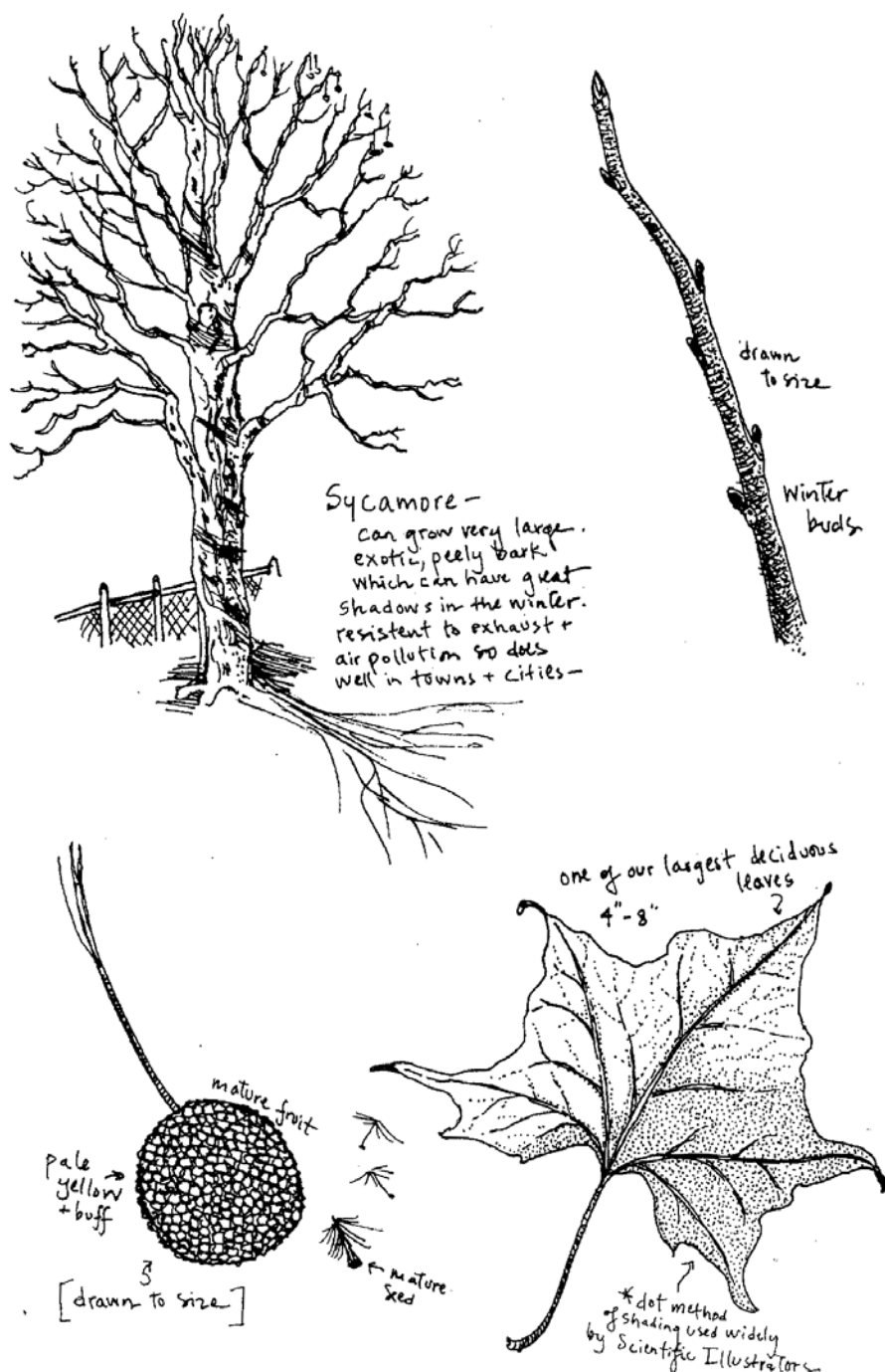
## Dr. Jane's Roots & Shoots Tree



Source: Dr. Jane Goodall



## Extension Activity



Make an inventory of the trees that grow in your area. Write descriptions of each; measure the leaves, fruit, and buds; draw a map indicating where each type of tree is located; draw full-tree silhouettes, and details of the twigs, buds, seeds, and dried leaves as best you can.

Observe the activity in one of your trees. What creatures are spending the winter in your special tree? What roosts in your tree and why? Which trees in the area are healthy; which are being adversely affected by human activities? What activities have various effects?

## Glossary

**Blind Contour** A sketch which is drawn using one continuous line, without looking at your paper.

**Canopy** The outline of an individual's tree shape, comprising the leaves and branches.

**Deciduous Tree** Trees that have leaves that fall off each autumn to save water loss in winter and to prevent extra weight in ice or snow storms.

**Evergreen** A tree which is in leaf throughout the year. Semi-evergreen is a tree which loses some of its leaves in autumn, retaining some until new leaves form in the spring.

**Habitat Conditions** Ongoing conditions, such as a drought or long periods of rain.

**Modified Contour** A sketch which is drawn using one continuous line, looking at your paper occasionally.

**Shrub** A tree which has more than one trunk.

## Resources

The Jane Goodall Institute. [www.janegoodall.org](http://www.janegoodall.org)

Lessons For Hope. [www.lessonsforhope.org](http://www.lessonsforhope.org) Lessons For Hope is a web-based curriculum written by the Jane Goodall Institute. High school students learn about Dr. Jane Goodall's life and explore the sources of her optimism and hope for the future. Activities are designed to empower students to make a positive contribution in their community.

Roots & Shoots. [www.janegoodall.org/rs/index.html](http://www.janegoodall.org/rs/index.html) Roots & Shoots is the Jane Goodall Institute's environmental and humanitarian program for youth.

You can find the following resources and other good books about drawing and nature at your school, local library, and bookstores.

Leslie, C.W. and Roth, C. *Keeping a Nature Journal: Discover a Whole New Way of Seeing the World Around You*. North Adams, Massachusetts, Storey Books, 2000.

Leslie, Clare W. *Nature All Year Long*. Dubuque, Iowa, Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 2002.

## Credits

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Special thanks to Clare Walker Leslie whose drawings and expertise in the area of nature journaling was instrumental in the design of this pamphlet. As an artist, educator and naturalist, she draws inspiration from nature and uses her talents to help others develop skills in observation and sketching. She accomplishes her goal of encouraging and enhancing our appreciation for nature through teaching and the publication of six books. To learn more about Clare Walker Leslie, visit [www.clarewalkerleslie.com](http://www.clarewalkerleslie.com)